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Her Majesty's Inspectorate  
for Education and Training in Wales

## Girls' participation in physical activity in schools

July 2007



BUDDSODDWR MEWN POBL  
INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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## Introduction

- 1 The purpose of this report is to respond to the request from the Welsh Assembly Government, in the Minister's annual remit to Estyn in 2006-2007, for information on how well secondary schools have used different programmes and initiatives to help to increase girls' participation in physical activity.
- 2 The report draws on:
  - responses to a questionnaire sent to teachers in charge of girls' physical education in every secondary school in Wales;
  - interviews with physical education teachers in 19 secondary schools in Wales and with heads of physical education departments in two authorities in west Wales;
  - interviews with girls from Years 10 and 11 in two schools; and
  - an interview with the Sports Council for Wales officer who manages the Active Young People's initiative.
- 3 Eighty-one of the 224 secondary schools in Wales responded to the questionnaire. Teachers in 42 of the 81 schools that responded indicated that they had made a specific effort to increase girls' participation.

## Main findings

- 4 There are many factors that influence the take up of physical activities by girls in school. The historical development of sports, peer pressure, parental attitudes and the coverage of women's sport in the media all have an effect. The school curriculum and facilities also have an important role.
- 5 The National Curriculum for physical education in Wales offers considerable flexibility for teachers to provide a variety of activities for girls. However, many physical education teachers offer a predominantly traditional team games programme. Many girls would prefer greater variety including more creative and fitness activities. As a result, in some schools, there are significant numbers of girls who find excuses to avoid participating in physical education, especially in key stage 4.
- 6 To attract girls to participate more, sports facilities must meet the expectations that girls might have in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Many schools still have inadequate sports and changing indoor facilities. Modern, high-quality, well-appointed changing rooms, including clean private shower areas and toilet facilities, and bright, attractive, safe areas for activities are essential for full and successful participation by girls. These requirements are relevant for males as well as females, but evidence suggests that they have a stronger impact on the take-up by females.
- 7 Similarly, the requirement to wear unfashionable physical education kit is often a barrier to girls' participation. In creative and fitness activities, where the formal school dress code has been relaxed or changed, the freedom for girls to wear their own choice of clothes, while still complying with hygiene and safety requirements, has led to increased participation.
- 8 Girls are more prepared to take part in physical activity when physical education teachers consult with them about what they do not like about physical education, and make an effort to adapt programmes to meet their wishes. Physical education and sport activities are more likely to be pursued by pupils of both sexes when senior managers give health and fitness activities high priority and secure reasonable allocations of lesson time.
- 9 Physical education teachers also have a key role in working with partners, such as local authorities and the Sports Council for Wales, in encouraging girls to continue participation in physical activity after they leave school. Teachers, local authorities, the Sports Council for Wales, sports clubs and leisure centres do not work together closely enough to create and identify effective 'exit-routes' for girls for this transition period.

## Recommendations

### **Senior managers in schools should:**

- R1 acknowledge the importance of physical activity for all by raising the profile of sport and physical activity in school;
- R2 show equal respect for girls' and boys' achievements and participation in physical education and sport;
- R3 improve changing and shower facilities; and
- R4 ensure that indoor facilities are available throughout the school year.

### **Physical education teachers should:**

- R5 consult with girls and make every effort to offer the activities within the physical education curriculum that girls want to do;
- R6 make a wider range of activities available, other than traditional team games, including at lunch times and after school; and
- R7 ensure girls are comfortable with the kit selected for physical education whilst giving due consideration to hygiene and health and safety issues.

### **The Sports Council for Wales and local authorities should:**

- R8 work with schools and other partners to plan and provide more opportunities for girls to continue physical activities when they have left school.

### **The Welsh Assembly Government should:**

- R9 help schools to invest substantially in improving physical education and sporting facilities; and
- R10 work with partners to promote initiatives that improve girls' participation.

## Girls' participation in physical activity

### Background

- 10 The participation of girls in physical activity has been strongly influenced by the development of modern sports that originated mainly in Victorian public schools. The most popular games during the Victorian period were male 'invasion' games, where teams attack the opposition's territory. Sports were also class-orientated. Sport in schools for the working classes was limited largely to drill and therapeutic gymnastics, although working-class women were largely excluded. In more recent times, improved standards of living and increased leisure time have enabled all social groups to participate more in sport. However, coverage of sport in the media still reflects this predominantly male history.
- 11 The Education Act (1944) established physical education in the curriculum of all state schools. State schools modelled themselves on public schools and concentrated on team games. Many pupils were taught in single-sex schools and girls' schools followed a similar team-games approach to physical education as boys' schools. Since then, physical education has moved more towards recreational and health-related fitness activities.
- 12 The National Curriculum for physical education has made a significant contribution to offering equality of provision for both girls and boys. The National Curriculum Physical Education Subject Orders refer to traditional girls' and boys' activities, but make no gender-specific requirements about which activities girls and boys must do. The National Curriculum therefore offers equal access to the full range of activities for both sexes.
- 13 In most schools in Wales, teachers also provide opportunities for pupils to take part in a variety of extra-curricular physical education and sporting activities. Most secondary schools offer a large number of traditional sporting opportunities. They often involve many pupils and produce work of a very high standard. These extra-curricular activities are mainly conducted in single-sex groups and involve the most able games players and athletes. There is a growing trend for activities to involve pupils of both sexes and to focus more on increasing participation than on providing opportunities for only the most physically able.
- 14 The Sports Council for Wales recognises the importance of providing equal opportunities for girls and women in a male-dominated sports world. In 'Women and Girls in Sport Review 1999-2005' the Sports Council for Wales made clear its position regarding the provision and uptake of physical education and sporting opportunities for girls and women. The review addressed the following issues:
  - participation levels;
  - active young people;
  - active communities;

- the provision and quality of facilities;
- the gap in participation and performance;
- the current role of women in society; and
- marketing and public affairs.

### **Physical education in the curriculum**

- 15 In primary schools, at key stage 2, the current physical education programme must include health-related exercise and five activities from the following list of six:
- games;
  - gymnastic activities;
  - dance;
  - swimming;
  - athletic activities; and
  - outdoor and adventurous activities.
- 16 In key stages 1 and 2, inspection shows that girls take part in all areas of activity in the curriculum with equal enthusiasm and achieve the same levels of success as the boys. Pupils in primary schools now play a good range of games regardless of gender including cricket, football, hockey, netball, rugby and pop-lacrosse. Girls have responded very well to being allowed to play games that have been traditionally considered to be the exclusive preserve of boys.
- 17 Schools can choose to teach swimming at either key stage 1 or key stage 2, and both boys and girls enjoy this activity equally. Although younger children are more confident in water and will learn to swim more quickly at an earlier age, most schools choose to teach swimming to Year 5 or Year 6 pupils. In addition to swimming, most schools base their key stage 2 programmes heavily on games and gymnastics, with a lesser emphasis on dance and, in the summer term, on athletics. The majority of schools choose not to teach outdoor and adventurous activities in key stage 2. If they do any outdoor activities, they include them in geography or environmental work. Again, where schools include adventurous activities, girls enjoy these activities as much as boys.
- 18 Many girls in primary schools choose to improve the expertise they have developed in curriculum lessons and attend mixed extra-curricular clubs. There are many examples of girls excelling at activities which are traditionally considered to be for boys, such as cricket, football and rugby. A number of girls go on to represent their schools in inter-school matches at this stage, with some being selected at a higher level to represent their districts. Boys are not selected as often to play games that

are traditionally considered to be for girls, for example netball. Many girls may not choose to continue to play these games in their teens and later, but the growing number of girls and women on football and rugby terraces shows that they sustain an interest in those games.

- 19 In key stage 3, the current National Curriculum physical education programme must include health-related exercise and four other activities, one of which must be games. Teachers must select three other activities, with at least one activity from the following:
  - gymnastic activities and dance; and
  - swimming, athletic activities and outdoor and adventurous activities.
- 20 Although primary school boys and girls are almost exclusively taught physical education together, in secondary schools they are taught more usually in single-sex classes. This is normally because two or often more classes are timetabled together with male and female teachers. Most physical education teachers are specialists in either a traditional male or female game, so it is easier for them to organise the use of shared facilities in single-sex groups, so that they can make the best use of the teachers' areas of expertise.
- 21 Since the introduction of the National Curriculum, physical education teachers have begun to teach boys and girls together in key stage 3, and to allocate the teaching of particular activities to match the teachers' interests and expertise. Many younger key stage 3 pupils respond well to this, but many girls, particularly those of average or below average physical ability, do not like this arrangement as they mature, and they prefer to work in girl-only classes. Even when girls are taught separately, more of them try to avoid physical education lessons from the end of key stage 3 and this increases in key stage 4. Most teachers also believe that, from this age, some girls are reluctant to participate outdoors, although they remain willing to take part in indoor activities.
- 22 In key stage 4, teachers have more flexibility in the activities that they can offer pupils. The National Curriculum Physical Education Subject Order requires that pupils are taught health-related exercise and two practical activities from any one or more of the following areas:
  - sport;
  - dance;
  - adventure activities; and
  - exercise activities.
- 23 The sport group allows pupils to focus on competitive activities such as athletics, gymnastics, trampolining, swimming, diving, rowing and canoeing as well as traditional competitive team games. Dance offers a choice from many types and styles of dance, including social (for example, ballroom or line-dancing), theatrical

(for example, jazz or contemporary), folk and historical dance. Adventure activities focus on outdoor learning and can include climbing, hill-walking, living outdoors and water-based activities. The exercise activity group is non-competitive and can include various aerobic activities, jogging, skipping, cycling and circuit and weight training.

- 24 In key stage 4, the National Curriculum in Wales allows pupils to try out, pursue and develop a variety of activities that will motivate them to continue taking exercise when they leave school. However, in practice pupils' choices are often limited by a number of factors. These include:
- the facilities available on-site and access to off-site facilities;
  - the cost of using off-site facilities;
  - the number of teaching-groups timetabled at the same time;
  - the expertise of teachers; and
  - the availability and cost of employing outside specialist coaches.
- 25 Of all these factors, the facilities are the most influential factor in determining which activities pupils can choose to pursue. In many areas of Wales, local authorities have built leisure centres on school sites and the use of the centres is usually prioritised for the school during the day. This has extended the range of indoor activities available for the pupils and has increased the use of the centres by pupils in out-of-school time, because pupils have a sense of belonging to the centre and do not feel intimidated. Where schools have an on-site swimming pool they feel that they have to make good use of it. However, more schools are deciding not to offer swimming to girls in key stage 4, unless it is the more relaxed style of aqua-aerobics. Year 11 girls say that they like aqua-aerobics because it has a musical accompaniment and they do not get their hair wet. They also say that they particularly dislike swimming early in the day because it takes so long for their hair to dry and, in the meantime, they have to sit in lessons feeling uncomfortable and unattractive.
- 26 The draft National Curriculum Physical Education Subject Order, currently subject to consultation for implementation in 2008, proposes that adventurous activities must be taught in key stages 2 and 3. This reflects the importance given to such activities by the Welsh Assembly Government in its publication *Climbing Higher*. Since many girls in key stage 3 are happy to participate in indoor activities, but are reluctant to take part in outdoor activities, the introduction of this requirement will need to be managed carefully if it is not going to discourage participation by some girls.

### **The role of the school in supporting physical education**

- 27 Schools have a very important part to play in encouraging pupils to develop and follow a healthy lifestyle. This does not always mean that senior managers in secondary schools give priority to physical education and some may consider it to be less important than academic subjects. Many secondary schools, when faced with finding time to increase option choices for pupils, reduce time for physical education. In the worst cases, pupils and teachers have only one hour a week for physical education in key stage 3 and key stage 4 for the whole range of activities required by the National Curriculum. In isolated cases, where dance is taught separately as part of Performing Arts in key stage 3, although time for dance is generous, there is not enough time to teach the four other physical education activities to an acceptable standard within the same time allocation.
- 28 The report of the Physical Education and School Sport (PESS) Task Force in 2000 identified the importance of prioritising the use of physical education facilities for physical education at all times. However, many schools still routinely use physical education facilities to hold external examinations, mainly because the space is large and therefore requires fewer examination supervisors. No other subject has its facilities taken away for substantial amounts of time. Given that research shows that reluctant girl participants are happier to take part in physical activities if they are indoors, the school's action in taking away an indoor space for physical education (often the only indoor space) causes additional difficulty for physical education staff in sustaining motivation and participation. It also suggests to pupils that physical education is not as important as other subjects.
- 29 The Welsh Assembly Government and the UK Government recommend that pupils should have at least two hours a week for physical education in the curriculum. It is difficult to inculcate positive attitudes to physical education and to achieve good standards of achievement in less time than this. Many schools reduce time for physical education in key stage 4 because of the pressure of finding adequate time for examination subjects. Most schools in Wales offer pupils the option to gain a qualification in physical education, but they also have to give time for physical education for all those pupils who are not studying the subject at examination level. In one school in south-west Wales, physical-education-for-all is part of a carousel arrangement with other subjects in key stage 4, so both boys and girls have even less time for physical activity. Such a decision by the senior management of the school gives negative messages to boys and girls about the value of physical activity in a healthy lifestyle.
- 30 The Welsh Assembly Government's PESS initiative has been successful in persuading most of the schools involved in the project to allocate two hours a week to physical education. Primary schools have responded better than secondary schools because they have more flexible timetables. In one secondary school in mid Wales, all staff rejected a proposal to cut an hour from mathematics, English and physical education in key stage 4 to increase option choices because they rightly felt that it was important for the pupils to relax and have a healthy lifestyle. The Welsh Assembly Government intends that every school in Wales should be involved in the PESS initiative by the end of 2009. This should improve both the profile of the subject nationally and the time that schools devote to physical education.

- 31 Physical education teachers report that senior managers' attitudes to girls' achievements in extra-curricular physical education and sport are often less positive than those shown to the achievements of the boys. Fewer female than male members of senior management teams turn up to support the school teams in matches against other schools either after school or at the weekend. This situation is often mirrored in parents' attitudes. Many more parents will turn up to watch and support their sons in matches against other schools than will watch their daughters. In some schools, the results of boys' matches are announced in assemblies before those of the girls. Often a low profile is given to participation in extra-curricular activities that are not results orientated. This bias may not be intentional, but it sustains the attitude that physical activity is more important and praiseworthy for boys than for girls. In the best examples, headteachers, male or female, show as much support for the girls' teams as for the boys' teams and vice-versa. Girls in particular appreciate this and comment favourably on it.

### **Successful measures to increase participation**

- 32 Many physical education teachers have thought long and hard about ways to increase girls' participation in physical education in the curriculum. The teachers who have been most successful in improving the rates of girls' participation in physical education have focused on adapting and improving the following aspects:
- department rules and expectations;
  - the rules about wearing school physical education kit, in particular;
  - the quality of facilities;
  - the range of fitness-based activities; and
  - the support and attitudes of the headteacher and all the senior management team.
- 33 In the best examples, physical education teachers say that they regularly talk to the pupils about what they like and dislike about physical education and what activities they would like to do and make every effort to meet these wishes.

### **Physical education department rules and expectations**

- 34 In four schools that have maintained high participation rates for girls, the physical education teachers say that they make their rules and expectations clear to pupils and parents before they join the school. They tell them that:
- physical education is a subject like all others and everyone has to take part;
  - pupils must bring their physical education kit to every lesson, even if they wish to be excused from taking part; and
  - even if they are unwell, pupils can take some part in the lesson, for example in leading a warm-up or in evaluating others' performance.

- 35 Pupils who do not bring kit have sanctions imposed and a letter is sent to their parent or carer. All teachers apply the rules consistently throughout the school. An important factor is that senior management fully support the physical education department in insisting that these rules are kept.

### **Adaptation of school rules about physical education kit**

- 36 Unfashionable kit has often been identified as a barrier to girls' participation in physical education in the past. In some schools, allowing girls who are reluctant participants to wear their own choice of comfortable kit for 'new activities' has had positive consequences in increasing participation. Girls are happier to take part when they are comfortably dressed and they also tend to stop trying to avoid physical activity when the kit is attractive and flattering.
- 37 However, for reasons of hygiene, physical education teachers and senior managers must make sure that girls change into appropriate clothing to take part in exercise, and do not wear the clothes that they wear around the school for the rest of the day. Similarly, for reasons of health and safety, pupils should not be allowed to take part in physical activity indoors while wearing tights or socks, even when they pull down the socks to allow the heel to contact the floor. Clothing and footwear must always be safe and appropriate.
- 38 In two schools that do not have falling participation rates for girls, physical education teachers have not relaxed the kit rules. Here, because physical education teachers consulted with the pupils when they were planning to change the kit, they chose the kit that was the most popular, including hooded sweatshirts and allowing a choice between shorts and track-suit bottoms. As a result, the pupils in key stage 4 decided that they wanted to keep to the school kit to avoid the competition that might arise if they could wear their own choice of clothing for physical education. The physical education departments in both schools ask the school council to review the physical education kit every year and bring any concerns to them. The school councils have not raised any concerns in either school for several years.

### **Improvement in facilities**

- 39 There have been significant improvements in the facilities for physical education in schools across Wales in recent years. Many schools have benefited enormously from grants from the Big Lottery Fund and indoor facilities in particular have been up-graded and extended and often now include high-quality fitness-suites. In the schools that have benefited from improvements in their facilities, all pupils enjoy the additional activities that are now available.
- 40 In those schools that have not had additional investment in physical education facilities, issues about privacy and modesty when using poor changing and showering facilities remain a barrier to participation. Many school changing-rooms are open, uninviting, poorly decorated and bleak. Showering facilities in most school changing-rooms are of the old-fashioned, open type, which make many teenage girls embarrassed and reluctant to use them. This does not encourage or support the aspirations of the Healthy Schools Programme or the Welsh Assembly Government's

Healthy and Lifelong Living agenda. The participation of females in physical education and sport needs to match their current aspirations, needs and life styles.

- 41 Schools that do not have leisure centre facilities on-site often make every effort to use facilities that are close-by and whose hire-costs are within the budget of the department or school. In one school in south-west Wales, the school council gave the physical education department funding to pay for the use of local facilities in a bid to sustain and improve the participation of both boys and girls in key stage 4. Physical education teachers consider this to be very successful and pupils' feedback to the school council has been so positive that the school council has offered to increase the funding to allow Year 10 pupils to benefit in the same way.

### **Wider range of activities**

- 42 Many teachers have adapted their schemes of work to offer indoor activities that are more fitness-orientated for pupils in key stage 4. These include:
- fitness circuits;
  - aerobics to music, including aqua-aerobics in the swimming pool;
  - Kick-boxing and Boxercise;
  - Pilates;
  - Tai-chi and Tai-kwondo;
  - yoga;
  - cheerleading; and
  - different styles of dance, including street-dance, Salsacise, rock 'n roll and belly dancing.
- 43 Teachers and pupils report that all these activities are very popular. In one school in south-east Wales, girls choose between games and fitness activities in key stage 4. Girls' participation rates, including those of 'reluctant girls', are sustained and often improved in key stage 4 when they can choose activities that are non-competitive and social in nature. Girls also say that they would much prefer their physical education lessons to be last thing in the afternoon so that they do not have to sit in subsequent lessons feeling hot and uncomfortable.

### **Support from the headteacher and senior managers**

- 44 Physical education teachers in schools where there is no problem with girls' participation in key stage 4, report that the support of the headteacher and senior managers of the school affects perceptions of the subject and pupils' attitudes to physical activity. In one school in north-west Wales, the headteacher is a former physical education adviser. The school has successfully made the connections between all the relevant initiatives such as the Healthy Schools scheme, the PESS project and the focus on healthy eating to highlight and actively encourage the importance of a healthy lifestyle for all. Physical education has a very high profile in the school. In two schools in south-west and mid Wales, the senior managers with responsibility for organising the timetable have arranged for key stage 4 pupils to have physical education at the end of the day. This has had a significant, positive impact on improving girls' participation.

### **Other issues**

- 45 A number of physical education teachers commented that the local and national culture does not encourage girls to think positively about physical activity. Sportsmen are often portrayed as being attractive and desirable and are positive role models for boys and young men. While there are many successful women sports personalities, few of them are promoted as positive role models for girls. Unfortunate personal references are still made about sportswomen that would not be made about sportsmen. Such references imply that women's sport is not as worthwhile or important as men's sport. This means that girls tend not to consider physical activity as normal a part of everyday life as it is for their fathers and brothers and this negative perception does not encourage girls to take part in physical activity.
- 46 Girls also need to know where they can go to take part in physical activities that they can enjoy in the evenings and at weekends. Close co-operation with sport governing bodies, local leisure centres, local clubs and local sports development units is very important when planning for progression, not just for talented girls, but also for all girls to have an active and healthy lifestyle. Many schools already have very good links with local leisure centres and more and more clubs are offering opportunities for younger people, including football and rugby for girls. These activities, however, usually appeal to the more physically able participants. Leisure and community centres should offer more opportunities for fitness activities and exercise to music for younger people. This means that more coaches are needed to provide the additional opportunities that appeal to girls and young women.

### **Initiatives to improve girls' participation**

- 47 Physical education teachers have been involved in a range of initiatives to improve girls' participation. Some of these initiatives were funded from outside the field of formal education. The initiatives increased opportunities by providing additional funding and facilities. Sources of funding have included the following:
- Big Lottery;
  - Sportslot;

- Sports Council for Wales Community Chest;
- Positive Futures programme;
- the Physical Education and School Sport Initiative;
- the Welsh Network of Healthy Schools' Schemes;
- Girls First Initiative;
- Nike Girls' Initiative;
- Governing Bodies of Sport;
- Junior Sports Leader Award;
- Local sponsorship;
- Sports Match; and
- the Steve Redgrave Trust.

48 The amount of funding provided by the above initiatives varies considerably. Some provide a few hundred pounds to pay for a sports coach. Others are large capital funding projects costing many hundreds of thousands or even millions of pounds, for example, Big Lottery funding.

49 When school facilities are improved, this often has a dramatic effect on the participation of both girls and boys. It also improves the standards achieved by both sexes. A good example of this is the provision of high-quality fitness facilities. Girls in particular find the option of following personalised fitness-programmes in a warm, inviting and stimulating room far more attractive than taking part in outdoor activities in bad weather.

50 All the schools that responded to the survey questionnaire reported that they had been successful in gaining funding from each scheme to which they had submitted a bid over the past four years.

**New programmes aimed at increasing girls' participation**

- 51 Physical education teachers have used additional funding from the initiatives identified above to plan imaginative programmes to improve and maintain girls' participation rates. The new activities offered to girls can be grouped as follows:

<b>Games</b>	<b>Fitness</b>	<b>Individual</b>	<b>Outdoor</b>	<b>Other</b>
Basketball	Aerobics	Fencing	Climbing	Cheerleading
Dragon Sport	Running	Golf	Life-saving	Coach education
Football		Gymnastics	Problem-solving	Duke of Edinburgh Award
Lacrosse		Judo	Rowing	Key stage 2 and 3 joint gymnastics
Tag rugby		Karate		Self-defence
Tennis		Tai Chi		Street-dance
Volleyball		Trampolining		
		Yoga		

- 52 Many of these activities are new to schools and have created a wave of new enthusiasm. Teachers have been able to capture the imagination of pupils and create a real interest in sustained activity. Additional coaches were employed for some activities and this increased the number of specialists available in the school.
- 53 Teachers also realise that, in some instances, facilities need to be used exclusively for single-sex groups. An example of this is a girls-only session in a fitness suite, where girls can choose exercises relevant to them, on their own, with confidence and in comfort.
- 54 The Sports Council for Wales recently introduced the '5 x 60' programme as part of their Active Young People initiative (see glossary for explanation). The programme is targeted at offering a broader range of activities in out-of-school-hours time, with the aim of everyone spending one hour each day out-of-school time on physical activity. This is a very positive development and a significant number of the activities are those that appeal to girls. Sometimes these activities are run by paid coaches; otherwise, physical education teachers and other members of staff give freely and substantially of their time for extra-curricular activities. These activities take place at lunch times, afterschool, at weekends and during school holidays.

**Access to funding**

- 55 Teachers welcome funding applications procedures that are simple and straightforward. A good example of this is the Girls First Initiative funded by the Sports Council for Wales. Teachers say they do not have enough time to complete long, complicated submission forms, sometimes for relatively small grants of money.

- 56 Where applications are overly bureaucratic and demanding, this can be a waste of teachers' time and effort, and teachers may need support and guidance to complete them. In local authorities without a specialist physical education adviser to raise awareness and offer support, schools have not applied for funding. Some teachers cited lack of support as an obstacle to bidding for money, for instance to the Big Lottery Fund.
- 57 Teachers require greater flexibility in how they can use grants. They understand that they are accountable for how they spend the money and accept that procedures for accountability are reasonable and manageable in most cases.
- 58 In some cases, pupils have to pay for some new activities. This often penalises pupils from low-income families. A major disappointment for teachers and pupils is that activities have to end when funding ceases. Although funding often encourages new activities, and this is often useful in providing 'taster' sessions, long-term benefits depend on their sustainability.

### **Sustainability**

- 59 All teachers surveyed are concerned about the lack of continued support for new initiatives. Teachers felt that this would be critical in determining the long-term success of raising the profile of girls' sport, and their participation in physical activity. This is true in the school curriculum, in extra-curricular activities and after they leave school.
- 60 In nearly a third of the schools that responded to the survey questionnaire, new activities stopped once funding ended. In other schools, in spite of efforts to sustain activities, teachers could see little hope of continuing them in the long term. The main reason given for ending the activities was that the funding had been used to pay for sports coaches, transport or facilities. Once this money was no longer available the activities had to stop.
- 61 Teachers consider that funding should be sustained beyond the usual two or three year period so that:
- early success can lead to further developments;
  - successful clubs can become well-established; and
  - high-profile performers and happy participants can continue with physical activity.
- 62 Where clubs and activities have ended after the withdrawal of funding, it often has a considerable negative effect on the attitude of girls and has worked against other attempts to raise the profile of girls' activities and to value their participation. Participation in after-school activities, where transport home had been funded through these initiatives, particularly on dark winter nights, has also tended to fall in these circumstances.

- 63 The one funding stream that teachers particularly valued was the five-year programme of the Sports Council for Wales Girls First Initiative. Many valuable new activities began as a direct result of this programme.

## Conclusion

- 64 More girls are now undertaking more physical activities than in the past. This has been the result of the contribution made by institutions such as the Welsh Assembly Government, the Sports Council for Wales, local education authorities, local sports development units, local clubs and governing bodies for sport.
- 65 Many physical education teachers have worked hard to encourage girls to continue to take part in and enjoy physical activity by listening to their views and responding to them wherever they can. Girls now have more choice of physical activities both in the curriculum and in out-of-school hours than they have previously enjoyed.
- 66 It is important to recognise that not all boys in schools have access to an extensive range of activities either. There should be equal opportunity and choice and equal standards in facilities for both girls and boys.

## Glossary

**AYP** – The Sports Council for Wales 'Active Young People' programme, which includes Dragon Sport, the PESS initiative and the '5 x 60' initiative.

**Dragon Sport** – a Welsh Assembly Government initiative managed by the Sports Council for Wales as part of the Active Young People programme. Dragon Sport coordinators in every local authority recruit and train teachers, parents and senior pupils from schools and colleges of further education to provide more high-quality activities out-of-school hours, mainly in primary schools.

**'5x60'** – a new Welsh Assembly Government initiative managed by the Sports Council for Wales as part of the Active Young People programme. Its aim is to get secondary school pupils in Wales more active. Over the next three years, WAG will invest £7.6 million in the scheme. The '5x60' project was piloted in eight schools in 2006.

**LEAs** – Local Education Authorities manage the PESS initiative, introduced by the Welsh Assembly Government in response to the report of the PE and School Sport Task Force in 2001.

**PESS** – The Physical Education and School Sport initiative. This is a Welsh Assembly Government funded initiative, managed by the Sports Council for Wales as part of the Active Young People programme. The PESS initiative aims to improve opportunities and standards in physical education in schools by developing resources and training teachers to use them well.

**SCW** – The Sports Council for Wales, who manage Dragon Sport, the '5x60' programme and the PESS initiative.